1: Hanks E-5 (1953-1954) 1964 AO7 Central Thai AO7

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A midwife or doctor could not be blamed, unless it was felt they did not help as much as they could have.

A child lacking in merit died. Such individuals, for some reason, did enough at their own birth. Words of comfort to a surviving mother were, "your baby did not have enough merit to live." If particularly sinful, it died after making delivery unusually painful. "Once a child was born dead, but it teased the midwife by moving its legs a bit. Consequently, its death was not the fault of the midwife." The child's lack of merit was proved by its death and its maliciousness. There was no hostility towards any child born in a hard delivery, for if both mother and child survived, the demerit that caused the suffering was the mother's.

761 782 845

On the other hand, a meritorious woman with a meritorious baby had a short, easy delivery. Such a child was considerate: "he will not hurt his mother, will help her to bear him easily, and will live."

844 782

A woman who safely came through childbirth felt deep satisfaction and new security. Bearing a child in itself did not bring any merit, though it was an act of mercy. Merit could come later with the ordination of a son. However, why one woman had successful or short labor, and another not, was unequivocally clear and accepted. If delivery were normal, she was confident of her and her child's store of merit. If not, she bore the anguish, convinced that she had brought it on herself in some previous life. Since sins were worked off with pain, every thrust made her future lives happier. Fear was minimized, for if death came, it was merit-determined.

[154] [761]

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775 Moreover, her life would some day begin again. Whether birth
844 was rapid or slow, the experience of the suffering deepened her sense of compassion and, as will be shown, brought her closer to fulfillment of her life role.[41]

Habit

153 If mutual help organized relationships, habit (khoēi)
82 stabilized them. Khoēi means "to be used to, accustomed to,
853 habituated." A first occurrence was an example and set the pattern for all subsequent occurrences. With one performance
[761] one was accustomed to an action. For instance, shortly after the temple was built 2 people died, deaths in Bang Chan "always occurred in pairs," it was the temple's "habit." Moverover, "the head priest could never expel a priest because he had never done so." Again, a few women saw to it that during this period their babies were given a few grains of rice (even though they were far too young to be offered any rice regularly), so that "later on, if they got sick, they could always at least eat rice," for "they would be used
[171] to it." "Glutinous rice was not good for babies in Bang Chan, but in North Thailand [where it was a staple] it could be eaten because people were used to it." Someone had set the example which started the custom.

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844 41. Bang Chan's Buddhist phrasing of the meaning of pain and
154 death in childbirth seems to indicate that childbirth occurred under psycho-cultural conditions that induced relaxation and
171 reduced fear and pain. An "easy" delivery lasted 2 hours.
114 According to a modern medical theory, Dick-Read: Childbirth Without Fear, passim) lack of fear of childbirth leads to mental and physical relaxation which in turn reduces pain and labor. Dr. Dan Bradley observed that labor was shorter among Siamese women than among non-Siamese. "Facts seem to prove that parturition is both shorter and easier to Siamese mothers than is usual to Europeans and Americans" (Bradley, 1865:79). We accept his first-hand observation because he had 40 or more years of experience in delivering babies, both Thai and non-Thai (missionary wives, etc.), and suggest that it may be taken as proof of mental and physical relaxation derived from lack of fear. Although the missionary women may have been frightened because they were in a far country, Dick-Read argues that fear of childbirth has long been present among American women and this fear has the effect of longer, harder labor.

4:Phillips E-4,5 (1956-1957) 1966
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and postural forms expressive of respect cited earlier; the repeated hesitation to place others in embarrassing situations; the hesitation to tell others bad news so that "they will not feel sad" or will not have to dissemble (although more often the less delicate reason is the person's fear of embarrassing himself). Of a still different order is the uneasy affability that is expressed in the nervous giggling accompanying many face-to-face relationships and in the compulsive preoccupation with inconsequential or inoffensive topics while conversing with others. These responses appear to be either attempts to maintain minimal contact with others while jockeying to find out what they are really up to, or, in the negative sense, efforts to fulfill the minimum requirements of interaction while waiting (and hoping) for the contact to come to an end. And still different from all these is the affability associated with trying to make a good impression on others expressed in the constant concern with displaying good manners, with using pleasing or flattering words, with being a good host, and the like. Although this category is in many respects behaviorally similar to the "politeness" referred to above, it seems to differ from the latter motivationally in that it is concerned not with the state and comfort of others *per se*, but with ego's effect on others.

As described above in simple summary terms, these responses might appear quite ordinary and at certain times applicable to any group of human beings. However, what impresses the observer in Bang Chan is the insistence and constancy of their use. These are precisely the forms that the villagers choose in the vast majority of situations for expressing the degree and quality of contact that they feel toward others. That they are in fact social forms—stylized, often ritualized, modes of behaving—should not be overlooked. It is just this characteristic that engenders the theme underlying all the responses and which indeed sets the tone of most Thai interaction: that the relations between people should be friendly, genial, and correct, but need have little personal commitment or involvement. As will be seen below, it is this readiness to phrase most face-to-face contact in terms of social rituals while at the same time feeling little commitment to others that actually lies at the root of what has so often been called Thailand's "loosely structured social system."

Social Play

The first response mentioned above, the tendency to turn social situations into occasions for play, is probably one of the most common of all human tendencies (it is certainly one of the earliest), but one that strangely has received little attention in the psychological literature. The few writers who have expressed any interest in social play have tended to view it simply

4:Phillips E-4,5 (1956-1957) 1966
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571 as a release mechanism from boredom or tension (Riesman and Bloomberg
1957, Roy 1959–1960), as a "healthy" escape from reality (Flugel 1954,
154 Bateson 1954), or as a normal and desirable regression to childhood pleas-
52 ures (Freud 1905 and 1928). Running through all these observations is the obvious Western bias that play somehow is divorced from, or a reaction to, the harsh facts of social reality.[8] On reflection, however, it is clear there is no theoretical necessity, either maturational or social psychological, for play to be limited to cathartic functions, or for regarding it as a less realistic or less mature psychological state than that which causes boredom, tension, escape, or regression. In fact, one might logically argue that the conditions which create the latter states are less realistic and immature because they represent retreats to forms of infantile masochism. Such questions of course belong to the realm of interpretive debate. The essential point is that in the process of learning to adapt to the social psychological realities of one's culture there is no inherent, ontogenetic requirement (other than that imposed by the peculiarities of one's culture) for human beings to renounce their motivations for play. Simply stated, having fun need not be so much a retreat from or defense against adult reality and responsibility as it is something to be sought after for its own sake.

121 The fundamental analytic issue here may well be whether play is a
154 psychobiological "given" of the human animal, on the same order as
52 hunger, sex, and other precultural needs, or a learned, secondary cultural

[8] Of these various interpretations, the most broadly conceived and carefully argued is Freud's, where play activities are linked theoretically to the interrelationships of the id, ego, and superego and the aims of the "pleasure principle." However, even here Freud was caught up in the Western cultural bias that only children, those who have not yet had to come fully to terms with social reality, could easily "afford" the luxury of play. This same cultural bias often appears at a totally different interpretive level in the rather crass pronouncements of journalists and travelers who, in writing about the Thai, refer to the "child-like" behavior of these people who spend so much time, energy, and money in having fun.

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Radcliffe-Brown's famous essay on the "joking relationship" (1952) is of course a special sociological case of the "tension release" function of play. In a brief paper, Keesing (1960) lists some seven overlapping functions of play, but here too play is seen largely as divorced from "everyday 'reality' activities." Callois (1958) brings together valuable cross-cultural data in what is otherwise a classification of organized games.

Probably the most comprehensive study of play ever written is *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play Element in Culture* (1938; English translation 1950) by the late cultural historian, Johan Huizinga. Although Huizinga is concerned mainly with structured play activities (games of skill, chance, guessing games) and with the relationships between play and ceremonials, one of his observations is worth noting: "Nature, so our reasoning mind tells us, could just as easily given her children all those useful functions of discharging superabundant energy, of relaxing after exertion, of training for the demands of life, of compensating for unfulfilled longings, etc., in the form of purely mechanical exercises and reactions. But no, she gave us play, with its tension, its mirth, and its fun. Now this last element, the *fun* of playing, resists all analysis, all logical interpretation. As a concept, it cannot be reduced to any other mental category. . . ."

4:Phillips E-4,5 (1956-1957) 1966
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need. The problem is that we really do not know, although comparative data from primatology (Yerkes 1943, Kroeber 1948: 27–29 and 60–61) clearly suggest that play belongs to the former category. If this is indeed the case it would imply that play is subject to the same degree of cultural influence, channeling, and socialization as are hunger, sex, and aggression, but can no more be fully obliterated than can these needs. Assuming, for the sake of argument, that this reasoning is correct, then the compensatory "escape" and "regressive" functions attributed to play by the authors noted above would not be at all unreasonable: play might well come to serve as an escape from adult reality in the same way that food sometimes serves as an escape from sexual anxiety or sex from food anxiety (Holmberg 1950). However, the point is that these are not the primary or typical functions of these needs, but secondary and defensive ones; although significant, they hardly comprise the necessary conditions for their being. If this approach is valid, we would be considerably wiser in our present state of knowledge (the Protestant Ethic and its intellectual extensions notwithstanding) to direct our attention to identifying the varying forms of play from culture to culture rather than to dwell on its secondary, compensatory functions.

Whatever its ultimate motivational basis, there is no doubting either the spontaneity or ingenuousness with which Bang Chaners turn social situations into occasions for play. For the most part they seem prompted in these situations by the simple desire to have a good time rather than to affect others in a socially pointed way, that is, their humor is not typically aimed at being sarcastic, didactic, or even exhibitionistic, although the person who excels at being funny is quickly recognized as such and is to an extent admired.[7] There is, in the negative sense noted earlier, an element of interpersonal effect operating here: comedy is a technique which almost by definition reduces the potentiality for face-to-face conflict. However, the villagers' play seems aimed primarily at satisfying personalistic function: their *individual* needs for pleasure and amusement.

The forms that these play activities take are numerous.[8] Perhaps their

[7] In the more explicitly institutionalized forms of comedy—*likes* (folk dramatic shows) or newspaper and magazine cartoons—these aims do come into play and often assume extreme, sometimes even biting, proportions. However, this is the comparatively safe world of theatre and "literature." Among themselves, in the world of face-to-face contact, villagers are considerably more gentle (or less sophisticated) and do not focus explicitly on such purposes.

[8] We will be concerned primarily with the forms of play, not its content. For whatever reason, humor and comedy seem to be the last refuge of what is genuinely private in a culture. Intercultural translations may succeed in communicating the manifest content of another people's humor, but they so frequently miss its intent that the result is either perplexity or disappointment ("Yes, and what happens then?").

The dangers of trying to share humor interculturally were perhaps never brought home better than when I tried to get the villagers' reaction to a story that received

4:Phillips E-4,5 (1956-1957) 1966
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181 461 476 salient: the free food, drink, and chitchat at the end of a hard day's work; the fun of working together with several other individuals. Notice that in this kind of situation there is no overseer demanding the person's effort. His labor is freely given and may be freely withdrawn.

181 *156 571 In describing *sanug* as a measure of how much villagers wish to commit themselves to a particular activity, I mean to communicate a point and not merely to turn a phrase. The word "commit," which appears often in this book, is used to convey the idea that coöperative, mutually expectable interaction as we know it in the West does not "simply take place" in Bang Chan. Rather, there is always the intervening factor of whether individuals want it to take place. Siamese are, first and foremost, free and independent souls. Much of the time they fulfill each other's expectations, but this is only because they want to, not because others expect it of them or because the situation demands it. It is the individual that is primary, not the social relationship. The strength of this principle is demonstrated by the fact that one is almost never surprised when one's expectations about another are not fulfilled. The assumption is: "If he did not do it, he must have had his own good reason."

181 • 154 *156 571 The potentialities for interpersonal frustration that are inherent in such a system are minimized largely by the hesitation on the part of individuals to build up strong expectations about people or events. In general, the Thai are a people who do not live at, and rarely reach, a high emotional pitch. Witness, for example, the specifications of "sanug-ful activities," those which afford the greatest pleasure: they are novel, diverting, comfortable, and frivolous, but there is no Faustian intensity about these joys. They are all rather muted emotional experiences. The point here is simply that in this kind of psychological environment, people rarely permit themselves to become so committed to an activity or to another person that the frustration of that commitment will be overly disturbing to them. They proceed from a premise which says in effect: "Well, it is really not that important that he did not do what I expected of him. I will simply have to make do."

181 154 *156 There are a few aspects of the villagers' concern with *sanug* that warrant underscoring. First, from an analytic point of view, *sanug* seems to reflect an attempt on the part of the villagers to lead a psychologically integrated life, wherein the time and energy one gives to an activity is rewarded immediately and directly with pleasure. This low-keyed pleasure should be an inextricable part of the total situation in which one finds oneself (or more accurately, into which one places oneself), not something to be deferred until a later, "more appropriate" time when it becomes an isolated segment of experience. Essentially, *sanug* should be—it not always is—a concurrent aspect of almost everything that one does. At the same time, however, these conditions are also the source of an inevitable paradox. Since "sanug-ful" activities are, by definition, novel and divertin[illegible] and

4:Phillips E-4,5 (1956-1957) 1966
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since even the most novel activities eventually become routine or stale, it is obviously impossible for all one's hours to be animated with *sanug*. From a total time perspective, many of the villagers' activities are of course either "sanug-fully" fallow or "sanug-fully" short-lived. To a large extent, this paradox is resolved *subjectively* by the short-term time perspective of the villagers. This is the second major point to be noted about *sanug*, that is, *sanug* reflects a more generalized tendency on the part of the villagers to concern themselves with activities that require only brief time commitments or whose effects are immediately forthcoming. Bang Chaners are not an impatient people in an active, negative sense, but they do have difficulty in attending to tasks that demand from them a sense of compulsiveness or staying power. They will often drop demanding tasks right in the middle once they have recognized that the work is taking longer than originally expected. What is striking is that they will do this with apparently no sense of frustration over not having fulfilled their aims and with no regret over having wasted their time. It is as if their original purposes had simply become irrelevant, and they had gone on to other things. This is precisely the attitude, for example, surrounding the construction of the unusable road referred to earlier leading from the Minburi Highway to the Bang Chan school. After devoting considerable labor to building the high mound that would form the foundation of the road, villagers lost interest when they were unable to obtain funds for its surfacing. Since no one was ever interested in maintaining it, the road now lies in the middle of a rice field, rutted and pitted; much of the foundation has sunk back to the level of the adjacent fields. However, no villager has ever considered the road a fiasco or "folly"; it was just something done in the past and has since been forgotten. The road project might be revived in the future, but from the villagers' point of view that too is irrelevant. The point is that *sanug*, with its emphasis on novelty and diversion, is expressive of this same underlying time orientation. In the villagers' way of thinking, no activity is really worth doing unless it has the potentiality for fun.

Another expression of the villagers' concern with play, related in some respects to what will be discussed in the next section, is their preoccupation with humorous *topics* of conversation. For the most part, they enjoy hearing and telling stories with a "banana peel" twist: of a husband who is caught by his wife sleeping with another woman; of an individual who, through his failure to take heed, is cheated out of his money. Such stories of course always concern other people, not those immediately present. Too, stories that combine whimsy and the supernatural—for example, of a "super-dog" that can find buried treasure or foretell the future—elicit laughter, although often with a tinge of apprehension that the stories may be true. However, what is most impressive about these and similar stories is the amount of time given to them.

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521 522 538 The sociological context of a story-telling is probably what is most important here. Bang Chan is a community where other than cultivating the single rice crop and attending to daily household chores and religious activities, the villagers realistically have little else to do but talk to each other. This is clearly not an inevitable attribute of the peasant condition, but it is true of Bang Chan where little attention is given to such creative leisure activities as craftsmanship, music, and art, and where there is little occupational specialization. In fact, probably more time is given to gossiping than to any other single waking activity except daydreaming. Bang Chaners talk of many things, serious as well as lighthearted: the price of rice, religion, gambling, the doings of "big people," family disputes, and the like. However, by far one of the largest segments of their total conversational repertoire is given over to "funny" stories. Of course, no story is ever *exclusively* humorous in nature; all communication is inherently multidimensional, and even the funniest story has a substantive, non-humorous message. However, if stories may be judged by their behavioral effects (laughter) irrespective of their intellectual content, then the function of a major part of Bang Chan gossip is amusement.[10]

538 154 The motivations for the selection of banana peel type stories are more complex. In part, the choice seems prompted by a "there but for the grace of God go I . . . " mentality. As suggested earlier, Bang Chaners have a keenly developed sense of the possible: to them, this is a world where anything, not only the probable or the predictable, can happen. The banana peel story, with its emphasis on the painfully ludicrous and extreme, is a perfect representation of such an uncertain world. Its beauty is

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[123] [114] [126] [10] During the early stage of field work, I attempted to do systematic naturalistic observations of these gossip groups. The purpose was simply to identify the kinds of topics uppermost in the villagers' minds and the modes of interaction that most frequently developed during the sessions; it was hoped that the latter information might be related to the psychological test materials of the discussants. As a precisely designed and executed project, the effort, however, was dropped after a short time. For one thing, it was too difficult for two observers to record the *simultaneous* verbal and kinesthetic interaction of *several* people without the aid of a self-powered tape recorder and with the added burden of having to strain the material through the translation process. The task was further complicated by the fact that the membership of these groups continually changed as people would leave and enter the conversations. Also the groups would often break down into smaller sub-groups. Most important was the sheer multidimensionality of the conversation: any one utterance could simultaneously be funny, aggressive, boastful, carry practical information, etc. However, enough information was culled from these early attempts and later less ambitious ones to prompt the statements presented here. It is this writer's observation that one of the reasons behind the success of so much of the "small group" research conducted in the United States is that the groups studied have been *problem solving* or *task-oriented*, rather than simple gossip groups. The highly functional nature of the former has provided built-in constraints on the freedom of action permitted the discussants, and has made observational problems comparatively easier to deal with.

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that it is simply a "story," a description of the plight of other people, not the self. The story-teller or listener has the pleasure of a vicarious experience, but none of the pain of the real life situation. He can laugh over his good fortune in not being the person who was cheated out of his money or who was caught philandering by his wife. On the negative side, these stories also serve as a means by which the participants can express, through identification and projection, some of their own hostilities. The veil of humor provides in fact the ideal dress for hostility: one can be completely unabashed about expressing one's feelings (of wanting to steal, say, or wanting to humiliate), since what is expressed, in a form so exaggerated as to be acceptable, is simply the feeling and not the act itself. The hostility is made even more acceptable by the fact that it is projected onto the person in the story rather than referred to ego himself. In these terms, the telling of these stories probably does have something of the cathartic function cited earlier in the chapter: aggressions and hostilities that are otherwise kept under careful control are here permitted to emerge not only painlessly, but with a bit of relish. Finally, some of the laughter at these stories is probably also based on the feelings of embarrassment evoked in listeners. This is similar to the "there but for the grace of God . . ." motive but is different in that it is not based on personal identification with the person who suffers but rather on a diffuse feeling of discomfort over the expression of aggression—aggression toward anybody. There is embarrassment over things not being as they should be, over one's moral universe being temporarily out of joint. Also, the laughter is probably symptomatic of the listener's uneasiness as he becomes aware that the hostilities portrayed in the story are strikingly similar to those he himself harbors toward others. Embarrassed about his own aggressive impulses, he assuages them with laughter.

The motives for focusing on whimsical topics of conversation are less recondite and defensive than the above. Stories of the type describing "super-dogs" who find buried treasure are told because they are at the same time such outrageous and yet gentle distortions of reality. It is the juxtaposition of incongruous elements that is so appealing here. In ordinary Thai thought, for example, the dog is generally considered to be one of the most inconsequential and worthless of creatures. He is tolerated for his ability to warn of strangers and dispose of refuse, but nothing remotely approximating the feeling of "man's best friend" is associated with him. For such a lowly creature to be the sudden possessor of miraculous power is just too foolish. An elephant, monkey, or cobra perhaps, but not a dog.[11] Only "uncivilized" forest people would accept such a story. Yet, because the dog is such a familiar part of one's environment and also a living creature

[11] Doubt would exist for these creatures too, but because of their mythological and historical significance it would be somewhat tempered.

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front, know that it actually elicits and betrays his anxiety, but have such implicit trust in his own resources that he feels no need to alter his behavior. Simply stated: uneasiness when it occurs is accepted as a social psychological fact of life; it is not felt as a threat to the integrity of the personality.

The actual expressions of nervousness and inconsequential conversation vary considerably. Perhaps their most obvious (and justifiable) expression is when a villager, who wants to get something from another person, for example, a job, a loan, higher rent on land, is uncertain about the other's reaction and approaches him by hedging around the issue with giggles and light, irrelevant comments. This mode of behavior typically occurs when there is no history of reciprocal benefits between the parties or when a middleman cannot be used.[17] Although villagers themselves do not consider such comments "irrelevant" (probably because from a ritualistic point of view they are not), it is hard to define a detailed discussion of a person's buttons or belt buckle as anything but a kind of phatic communion. Sometimes conversations of this type will go on for twenty and thirty minutes, often branching off to include more topical interests such as the size of eggs or the calls of birds, before reaching the point. Frequently they never reach the point, since somewhere along the line the individual recognizes from the tone of the conversation that the other person is not in the proper mood to entertain his request; in this case, the individual will explain that he came simply "to chat." Sometimes the friend will begin to giggle uneasily (particularly if the protagonist's references to him contain an excess of flattery) as he becomes aware of the purpose of the conversation and wishes to evade facing the ultimate issue. Very often, even when the final request comes out, he can avoid it simply by giggling. Under such circumstances a giggle is crucially communicative: it is the person's polite substitute for "No," or "Let us bring this particular topic of conversation to an end." Giggling is a wonderfully effective way of carrying on a "conversation" (for those who can read its "vocabulary") because one can so readily convey his refusal, wariness, and even hostility while at all times maintaining the illusion of friendliness. It is precisely because the villagers' giggling frequently rests on such devious attitudes that it appears

[17] The *quid pro quo* basis of the former would permit a considerably more direct approach. It is not difficult to be frank with a person when both you and he realize that you are asking for an earlier obligation to be repaid or that you are creating a new one which may be called upon later when needed. Villagers are highly responsive to such obligations, often going to considerable effort and personal discomfort to meet them. A middleman, on the other hand, is used precisely to avoid the kind of delicate encounter described here. As a disinterested third party, he can be completely candid in his requests. However, for reasons of secrecy (usually when the request involves some potential competition or envy of other villagers, or perhaps some sharp-dealing) the use of a middleman may be inappropriate.

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to be somewhat nervous. Like the conversational topics mentioned above, its purpose is to maintain social contact, but at a minimal substantive level.

Other uses of giggling are less consciously purposeful than the above. Perhaps the most frequent instance of this is when villagers are talking about or responding directly to an unfortunate situation: a flood destroying the rice crop, a friend or relative dying or being beaten up, a person committing suicide. Giggling under these circumstances seems to represent several related sentiments. On the one hand, it indicates a slight feeling of embarrassment over having discovered something or talked about something which would have been better left undiscovered and undiscussed. At the same time, it is an attempt to make light of the misfortune by suggesting that the speaker and those present should not be overly pained by what they are encountering. Giggling here serves very much the same kind of function as the phrase *maj pen raj* ("it is nothing") referred to earlier; it is a means of shrugging off and denying a feeling of distress. Finally, giggling often is also a kind of ironic commentary on the human situation—not in any abstract philosophical way, but in the sense that a tragedy is so often actually felt to be a comic exposure of human hopes and intentions. A little exchange between the writer and an elderly villager perhaps best illustrates this. During one of the two rainy seasons I spent in Thailand, the rains were especially heavy in the Central Plain and destroyed the rice crop of many Bang Chan farms. As might be expected, it was a topic of considerable discussion. Paddling down the canal one morning, we met a villager who was returning from inspecting his fields, and we stopped to chat. The discussion inevitably turned to the flood, and he told us, in a completely matter-of-fact way, that he had already lost about 50 percent of his crop. He then giggled nervously over what he had said, and followed it up with, "But that person over there has lost everything." His giggles then turned into laughter as he nodded his head in an attitude of pain. Months later, when things were considerably more comfortable for the villager (as it turned out, he had lost only about 5 percent of his crop) I recalled our meeting and asked him what he thought was so funny about the flood. He did not remember, but volunteered in a nice, didactic way: "When something like a flood happens, all you can do is laugh."

Giggling is also a favored mode of dealing with the countless situations that arise in daily life that are perceived by the villagers as potentially, or imminently, embarrassing. Here giggling is a substitute for an explanation of one's actions, particularly those that are considered annoying to others. Villagers who have missed an *important* appointment (lesser ones are missed with few qualms) will tend to giggle when they finally meet the person and there is the slightest indication of the latter's displeasure.

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Giggling is very often used in the marketplace when an item must be bargained over. Similarly, a villager who wants to quit working for another will usually preface his request with some giggling, although equally often he will just leave—saying absolutely nothing—and will later send a middleman to collect his wages and make the severance official. The latter alternative is prompted by the desire to avoid *all* awkwardness.

The third major form of the villagers' politeness—that associated with making a good impression on others—has to a certain extent been covered by the materials already presented. Thus, in terms of the actual manifestations, there is really little difference between flattering another person, for example, because it will make him feel good, because it will make getting something out of him much easier, or because it will make one appear much more attractive in his eyes. However, it is clear that the motivations in these three cases are all quite different. It is for this reason that the last category has been introduced. When villagers meet another person whom they regard as significant (and this by no means includes all their contacts) they do put forth considerable effort to make a good impression on him. And being polite—courteous, helpful, flattering—is one of the most suitable means for achieving this effect.

Discussion of this interactive mode would perhaps not be necessary were villagers themselves not so keenly aware of it. Village children are continually and consciously taught, by word and deed, the necessity always to put their best foot forward (cf. the earlier illustrations in *Characteristics of a Good Person*). Bang Chaners assess themselves and others in terms of their capacity to make themselves appealing: both the "good" and the "competent" person is one who can make himself attractive by speaking softly, gently, and if possible, beautifully and cleverly. Often villagers take offense at an individual who refuses to do this because his very refusal suggests that he does not feel respect for others. Again, it should be emphasized that we are talking here about the form of behavior, not the substance or commitment behind it.

What the ultimate psychological roots of this behavior are is unclear. It is apparent—largely because of the great attention given to formal considerations such as manners, proper speech, and the like—that this concern is not prompted primarily by the desire to be loved by others. Love would require a more substantial medium. Gaining the respect and approval of others is clearly an important component of the attitude, but one wonders why a people otherwise so self-loving and self-accepting should need their self-esteem repeatedly validated by others. Perhaps the most important reason behind the villagers' concern with impressing others really has little to do with the others themselves, although obviously at the behavioral level it implicates them—that is, I would suggest that the major factor behind the

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IV

The Sentence Completion Technique

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The following discussion details the logical considerations which underlie the analysis of the SCT responses and the procedures which have been devised for such analysis. At the same time it will serve as an introduction to the general nature of the SCT responses.

The analysis rests upon five premises.

How the SCT Works

First, despite its title and appearance, there is nothing particularly esoteric about the Sentence Completion Technique. It is primarily a useful and efficient way of asking questions about matters which are of central concern in personality research—feelings of rejection, failure, anxiety, and the like—but which might be considered sensitive or personal by our informants. That the questions are phrased as incomplete sentences rather than as direct interrogations is an attempt to get at these issues in a psychologically comfortable way. Concomitantly, it is an attempt to circumvent the tendency for individuals to set up resistances and blocks when queried on such matters.[1]

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[1] Whether Bang Chan villagers consider feelings of rejection, failure, and so forth, to be sensitive or private topics is, at bottom, problematic, since we have little reason to assume that they or the members of any non-Western culture share our attitude in this regard. The writer suspects that in some areas Bang Chaners do share Western attitudes about what sentiments should be concealed from (or revealed to) others, and in other areas do not. For instance, Bang Chan men would no more discuss their sexual impulses toward their daughters than would American fathers—in contrast, for example, to Pilaga Indian men (Henry 1955: 265). In contrast, most Bang Chaners seem considerably more reticent than Americans about revealing their aggressive feelings, but are considerably freer in discussing feelings of personal failure. Such discussion, of course, always varies in terms of the degree of intimacy between people.

[123] Two general considerations thus seem clear: (a) Bang Chan villagers are precisely like other human beings in that they have a tendency to conceal and reveal certain feelings, although the specific feelings concerned may or may not be the same as those of members of other cultures; and (b) since in the beginning of his research, an investigator really does not know in what areas or to what degree his informants are sensitive, it would seem prudent to use a technique which assumes sensitivity in all areas and attempts to get at these feelings in the least uncomfortable way.